

Improving Compliance in Indian Country

EPA Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance

Geographic location or area of activity: Indian country throughout the United States. Indian country represents a land area of about 70 million acres and includes reservations of less than 10 acres to more than 14 million acres. EPA currently directly implements federal environmental laws under virtually every program in Indian country as very few tribes manage EPA-approved environmental programs.

Description of activity: In FY 2007, EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA) and Regional Offices continued to implement the Tribal Compliance Assurance National Priority (Priority) by focusing national attention on three key compliance assurance and enforcement issues affecting Indian country: (1) drinking water systems; (2) illegal dumping and solid waste management; and (3) schools. These three areas currently serve as the heart of OECA's Indian Program and the basis for OECA's on-going work with federally-recognized Indian tribes (tribes) to improve compliance at regulated facilities in Indian country. Under the Priority, EPA and EPA-sponsored circuit riders provided targeted, on-site compliance and technical assistance to hundreds of tribal drinking water systems, schools and solid waste programs.

While the assistance was designed to increase understanding, improve environmental management practices, and reduce pollution, OECA and the Regions also conducted inspections and pursued appropriate enforcement actions when noncompliance was identified. To support the Priority, OECA also worked with tribes to launch a Web-based Tribal Compliance Assistance Center and to release the Profile of Tribal Government Operations. Both the Web-based Tribal Center and the Tribal Profile are designed for tribal environmental professionals and tribal facilities to easily obtain comprehensive compliance assistance and pollution prevention information by environmental topic as well as by impacts on the air, water and land. As a Web-based tool, the Tribal Center offers tribes immediate access to EPA personnel who can answer environmental compliance questions and facilitate the reporting of environmental violations.

OECA also provided training to hundreds of tribal environmental professionals as part of a new Tribal Training Strategy created to build the enforcement and compliance capacity of tribal governments. Tribes also participated in EPA and EPA-sponsored inspector training developed by the Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals at Northern Arizona University. At EPA's request, properly trained tribal inspectors also conducted inspections at federally regulated facilities in Indian country on behalf of the Agency.

Throughout 2007, OECA communicated with tribes to obtain feedback on the scope, content, and design of each activity and the Priority's implementation. This bilateral communication was important because it facilitated a dialogue on the connection between environmental compliance and improving public health in Indian country.

Interagency partners: Federally-recognized Indian tribes. In particular, OECA's national partnership involved representatives of tribal environmental programs participating on the Tribal Caucus of EPA's Tribal Operations Committee and the various Regional Tribal Operations Committees

Local partners: Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals, Northern Arizona University

Before/after photos associated with the Marty Indian School Lab Chemical Cleanup on the Yankton Sioux Indian Reservation



Activity URLs: www.epa.gov/tribalcompliance and <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/data/planning/priorities/tribal.html>